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Letter from Anne Whitney, Ecouen, France, to Sarah Whitney, 1875 October 10

Anne Whitney

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Edmon - France Oct. 10 - 75

My dear Sarah - If fortune is an unwonted word. Surely a French dictionary would have helped you out of the dif^y. - but what vocab^y. in the world could deliver me from the depths of "hunky dory"? If ever a word looked as if it wd. throttle one it is that word. But taking it for granted that when a thing is all hunky dory it is not common fault. I will try to illumine the dark places of your mind in respect to our social surroundings - In a letter to Mr. Shannon I have given a general hist^y. of affairs & if you sh^d. ask her. you might perhaps have the blanks filled out that I may have here.

Our right-hand neighbor - Mons. Ruvère I remember I have heard of in the summer as having been drunk & having beaten his wife - but as we heard along with this. that she beat him also. the affair did not fix itself in my mind as a thing to be troubled about.

That little bromillie (See F. D.) cleared up the domestic sky, I suspect. for I have heard nothing since. Perhaps it was the first time that

mons. has tried it on. & finds
med. quite up to that nine-points
ruin of the law wh. holds here probably
as well as at home. Did incidentally see
Comb & her Superior having on the
waysafe - She is a washwoman &
her arms are splendidly developed.

Also, otherwise she is an attractive
if not a brilliant woman. with an
immense kindness & bonne femme.
her fine flock of children are al-
ternately a nuisance & a delight.

There is no door on our left - but
up the Court at right angles. There
is a family of somewhat more
advanced pretensions. in wh. there
is a good baby & a charming boy
of 12 or 14 yrs - The man has some
sort of clerical work. the wife like
all the peasant kind - hard-working -
but not in the fields.

You evidently think that our social
surroundings is not of a kind on wh more
& intellectual progress might be predicated
for us - perhaps you are right - but
I can stand it - till now. & our stay

here serves a purpose of great
utility of wh. ~~say~~ I will write
in a future letter. But at all
events we have a very comfortable
place here. & if we do eat with lead
forks made at a cost of 4 cents
apiece out of Mr. Forens old
paint-tubes (as has also table-
spoons of the same) - & at first
it was a desperate trial having
no easy chair ^{drop into} after the fatigues
of the day (we have hired one now)
yet - the perfect cleanliness, than
wh. the palaces of popes & queens
possess no greater luxury. with good
beds & good food. make living here
a tolerably pleasant thing - Also
these people about us. with whom
we have a friendly little chat in pass-
ing. now & then are polite among them-
selves & to us. Mons. & Madame
is always their address to each other.
& perhaps there is no feature of French
peasant life - (I incline to think
that all kinds of life in this country)
more striking to a stranger, than the

independence wh. marks their
intercourse with their superiors
in goods or place. While almost
every peasant ^{man} you meet lifts his
hat to you - the children & a woman
greeting you pleasantly - I have never
seen the slightest servility. Mr.
Paine has been off & on at work
for 3 months in ^{some of your & your sons, often} Mrs. Stevens house.
The conversation about - the joking
laughing - chatting to him & among
themselves seems to be just as free
with no rudeness - as if it were all
in the same family. We have often
remarked that in practical democracy
the French seem near to the true
standard than any people we know.
This relates merely to manner.
I suppose ~~that~~ there are in
society the same vices & vici-
ousnesses as elsewhere. Since
the first revolution the peasant
especially has stood upon his dignity -
this I learn from George Sand & it
accords with all we have seen.

I give my dear Sarah

To destroy yr. Confidence in that
silk dress of mine - so elaborately
conceived & finished - It is a ques-
tion if I can wear it - another week
Everywhere where it was folded in
the piece - rents are appearing
& the whole thing slides into the
"imperial mane". There are long
slits ^{beginning} in the very front of the
overskirt. So that it is almost a
danger to wear it - into Rains. Ad-
d says I bought a stripe of black &
brown in Europe the other time &
we wrote it down in memory that
stuff of that kind was never to be
confided in again - but something
blotted it out. We are going to the
bon Marche some day this week
to fit out. I have to get a work-
dress. &c. There is no change of
firth required in my clothes. Take
this with the inferential Gospel as
to my continued delirium of outline &
be happy. Lacorn's bread is good.
Lacorn is only my landlord or lady

27 June 1870
4 weeks
at the house
teacher at the house
my dear one
finger

at dinner - or dejeuner - I shd. say -
he is also the village baker. When
we dropped off the 60 cl. dinner -
proper from our meals (at the
Restaurant. alias Le Cornier) because
it in no wise differs from the
Lunch or dejeuner. & except by the
addition of a fiddle soup. we
substituted for it - what Aimie
calls a petite collation, an exp.
meal of bread wine & fruit - with such
addition as Aimie in her liberality chooses
to make from her own savory prep-
aration for dinner. Now delicate
fried potatoes - now - ditto not fried
with onions - now roast - rabbit - or
mutton - little meat much of something
else good. She is a Capital Cook.

This - in answer to your inquiries.
I wish it were more amusing.

I recd. a letter from Katy
a few days since & am rejoiced

Will send love

at the good cell' she gives of herself
I hope Mr. Lombard has wholly re-
covered from the fall she speaks of.
She says she wants to sit often over
there for a few days at least. I
hope she will succeed.

Do not feel distressed
if the Centennial remains ungraced
by contribution of mine - I start at the
impossible - & you know there is
nothing in America that I can send.
But thus much I will say - I think
I can get V. A. ready to ship the 1st of
June. If on certain grounds - as for
instance - its being V. A. & he what
he was. & the delay having been due
& the back of American Enterprise, Mrs.
Fields can make intercession with the powers
& have it admitted just bef. the opening.
I will send it. Perhaps Mr. Winsor
might be useful in the matter. I
will write again to Mrs. F. (the com. being

Adeline disapproves as much as I. the
female dep't design - but she says - as
to sending she is unable not unwilling.

I directed to have letters sent from
the 1st oct. to ^{me} Van Givens 59. Had

Will have to be asked - this will be in time

I know of our long stay here I shd.
have arranged otherwise - but it makes
no diff^{ce} - I shall go there this week
& can have directions with the Conduing
Board out here.

Love weather as here
with much of wet & sombre. But to-
day - is like Crystal. Last week
was the vintage - ~~two~~ ^{one} days was of
ideal loveliness. We went to the
vineyards & amused ourselves among
the boys & girls - cutting a small share
of the abundant harvest. After. we
stood on the hill - slope among the
trees above & looked down & over them.
The heavens were a sight - wh. nobody
saw but ~~us~~ ^{ourselves}. The sunset was beautiful
wrapping in glory far Paris & the wide
rich Champaign this side - Right over
the vineyards stood 3 ^{very} clouds in exact
shape of horns of plenty - one crowned with
fruit - & over these a yard above - hung
the 2 quarters moon - These Cornucopias
were so firm of form like Hamlet's cloud.
They were nothing less else - & in the evng.
quite they kept their shape marvelously.
for 10 or 15 minutes holding up to the view of
earth this symbol of content & promise - &
with this little gift - I return for this week -
with love -